

2/11/55

J. Michael Hagopian, travel-lecturer and producer of motion pictures comes to the Cleveland Museum of Art on Friday February 11th to present his film HIMALAYAN HOLIDAY.

From his grade school days in Boston, high school in Los Angeles, through graduation and master's degree at the University of California and his doctorate at Harvard University, Dr. Hagopian nourished a deep interest in the problems and destiny of the Middle East. A naturalized American citizen, he read prolifically in Arab and Ottoman history and affairs. It was thus his ambition of many years to return to the Middle East for first-hand observations.

In 1948 Dr. Hagopian was an instructor of International Relations at the University of California. He was invited to head the Political Science Department of the American University of Beirut, largest American educational institution abroad. The American University of Beirut held a strange fascination for Dr. Hagopian. There his father received his medical degree as a student of one of the early graduating classes of the medical school. "The building in which my father studied anatomy had been converted into the social science building, and the room where he studied and learned about America was the room which became my private office where I taught about this land of ours."

"Beirut was no stranger to me," says Dr. Hagopian, "for I had journeyed through it at the age of nine. I had been retrieved from the bottom of a well in Turkish Armenia, a well dug specially by my Armenian parents wherein to hide me should they perish as surely it seemed their fate during the holocaust of World War I."

Came Pearl Harbor and Dr. Hagopian spent three years in the 20th Air Force in China, India and the Marianas. His first postwar position was that of Instructor of Economics at Oregon State College at Corvallis.

He received an invitation in 1950 from the Indian Government to lecture on Middle East politics and American foreign policy at the famous Benares Hindu University. He was one of the first American professors invited to do this. His year in India was a passport to an understanding of Hindu culture.

His film, HIMALAYAN HOLIDAY, is a comprehensive coverage of one of the most strategic regions of the world, the greatest land barrier between Democracy and Communism.

Over a two year period Dr. Hagopian walked nearly 2000 miles on Himalayan trails, moving up into innumerable mountain passes. He was lost on one occasion, stranded at another time. He sneaked into South Western Tibet and lived there a month when the Chinese Communist Armies were marching into Tibet. For several months a religious "guru" begged food from the villagers to feed Dr. Hagopian.

"Kashmir was the most serenely pleasant paradise on earth," says Dr. Hagopian, "Zemu Glacier a most forboding and frightful experience, the source of the sacred Ganges River an inspirational achievement."

"I made new friends there in the hills, (living at an elevation of 10,000 to 14,000 feet) who are waiting for the dawn of man's New Day, who have turned their backs on civilization, and are living in the land of eternal snows - meditating. When I am lonely and think of man's last snowy frontier, I remember only the warmth and the kindness of the people there. HIMALAYAN HOLIDAY is a film as much about peoples and their way of life, as it is of snow capes under the roof of our sky."